

CHEROKEE COUNTY

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Council Priorities

1. Health

Cherokee county will have adequate local Medicaid dental services.

2. Safety

Cherokee county children and families will have adequate available resources to increase the awareness of the relationship between substance and child abuse/neglect.

3. Education

Cherokee County children and families will have adequate available resources to increase the awareness of the effects of substance abuse by parents and caretakers on academic performance.

Issues

Issues are the primary concerns or problems facing children in the county

Early Care Education

Children (0 – 5) are provided opportunities to fully develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively and are ready to succeed.

Make maximum use of the Family Resource Center

Action Steps

- 1) When Family Resource Center is open, send letters to all day cares and pre-k's informing them of FRC services and referral abilities.
- 2) Documenting the number of families referred to FRC to document need.

Educating day care workers in identifying health needs

Action Steps

- 1) Provide workshops for day care workers.
- 2) Provide information to parents describing brain development and learning by age 5.
- 3) Mail out information to families by CPC.

Licensure of all child care providers

Action Steps

- 1) Make contact with other CPC's to lobby for licensure of all day cares.
- 2) Make legislators aware through lobbying that 61% of children under age 6 have both parents working.
- 3) Run PSA's on the radio such as "Quality licensed childcare can help a child be ready to go to school at the age of 5 and prevent later delinquency.
- 4) Run PSA's about the need for more pre-k programs in the county.

Knowledge of available services for ages 0-5

Action Steps

- 1) Providing radio announcements on available services for ages 0-5.
- 2) Provide public service announcements to the paper listing the services available for ages 0-5.
- 3) Collaborate with Alabama Partnership for children in "Zero to Five Matters" campaign to educate families, community leaders and legislators about importance of learning in the 0-5.

Economic Security

Children grow up in a financially stable home where the child's basic needs can be met.

Cherokee County needs an active Family Resource Center

Action Steps

- 1) Provide support if needed by the Family Resource Center.

Cherokee County needs an active grant review team

Action Steps

- 1) The Cherokee County Children's Policy Council will gather experienced grantee's in our community to provide expertise in what would be needed for a grant review team.
- 2) Develop a purpose statement, description of the duties, and meeting schedule of the grant review team.
- 3) Identify prospective members on the Cherokee Children's Policy Council and members of the community who could serve on the grant review team.
- 4) The grant review team will be responsible for keeping a current/or up to date repository of general statistics and demographical information about our community and state that is frequently used on all grants.
- 5) The grant review team will review proposed grants from our county to insure agency collaboration.

Education

Children learn the skills necessary to become productive citizens.

Child/adult illiteracy

Action Steps

- 1) Combine the programs "Mother Read" and "Read to Succeed" for family literacy.
- 2) Provide messages on the importance of reading in the home, radio, newspaper, etc.
- 3) Continued support in the community for the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI).

High school dropouts

Action Steps

- 1) Provide school and community messages about the importance of receiving a high school diploma (newspaper, radio).
- 2) Provide on-line tutoring for the struggling students and adults who have not acquired a high school diploma. Possible sites include but not limited to schools, county library, Gadsden State local campus, etc.

Children affected by living in a home with parents/caretakers who use drugs

Action Steps

- 1) Continue drug prevention education in the schools.
- 2) Provide school/community messages concerning the harmful effects of drug use.
- 3) Provide help for children/adults affected by drugs-Celebrate Recovery, Bradford Health Services, etc.

Health

Children's (0 - 19) physical and mental well-being in the county.

Mental health services for children and youth

Action Steps

- 1) Coordinate with CED Mental Health to provide additional mental health services for children and youth in Cherokee County.
- 2) Educate the public and community leaders about the available mental health services for children and youth in Cherokee County and the need for additional funding services.
- 3) Work with community leaders who are willing to increase the mental health services for children and youth in Cherokee County.

Medicaid dentist

Action Steps

- 1) Communicate the need for a Medicaid Dentist in Cherokee County to the Medicaid office in Montgomery.
- 2) Identify any dentists in the area who accept Medicaid and will be willing to establish a satellite office in Centre.
- 3) Identify any rural incentives currently being offered to dentist. Educate prospective dentists about the incentives and the potential for growth in Cherokee County. Prospects will be identified through dental schools located within the State of Alabama.

Parent Involvement Skills

Parents and guardians participation and effectiveness in fostering an environment for children to become mature, responsible and independent adults.

Parental involvement

Action Steps

- 1) Collaborate efforts by the schools, organizations, Head Start, early childhood education programs, faith based initiatives and local businesses of the need in our community, and for parent involvement programs or classes that teach parent involvement. These programs will directly prevent child abuse/neglect, crime, drugs, academic failure and teen pregnancy by increasing positive parental involvement.
- 2) Educate parents by speaking to them at local PTSO meetings and open house type settings about harmful effects to their child as a result of lack of involvement in their child's academics, extracurricular events and everyday life.
- 3) Educate the public about the benefits to society of parent involvement through radio and public service announcements in newspapers, newsletters, or by participating in parenting seminars.
- 4) Educate parents on how and where to get involved in schools and community efforts that benefit families and children.

Parenting skills

Action Steps

- 1) Coordinate efforts on the part of schools, community organizations, businesses, after school and summer program to collaborate on times and places of child functions. Having child functions and parent functions simultaneously would help parents make maximum use of time to take a parenting class or go to a seminar to improve parenting skills.
- 2) Educate local school counselors, health and mental health departments, DHR, court systems and law enforcement of parenting classes available for referral.
- 3) Distribute flyers and brochures on parenting skills to school children to take home to parents. Ask local businesses to place informational flyers in shopping bags.
- 4) Contact local radio stations on possibly running a "parenting tips" public service announcements that would air during travel time to and from work.
- 5) Educate parents about services available such as free Title I. Services that help children succeed in school, or McKinney Vento, a school based program that helps qualifying students and families increase knowledge of child development age appropriate behavior and activities, strengthen families through good communication skills, learn positive discipline techniques and seek informal support from friends and relatives.

Parent education

Action Steps

- 1) Educate community of "Read to Succeed", a community wide adult literacy program, established in 2002 by the Centre First United Methodist Church. The "Read to Succeed" program is run entirely by volunteers and offers free-one-to-one tutoring. The instructors are Pro-Literacy-certified tutors.
- 2) Educate and recruit potential parents to the Adult Education program offered through Gadsden State Community College here in Centre, directed by Fran Bright. The program offers free GED classes, helps participants pass exit exams for high school, and helps participants get prepared for college course work. The program also offers qualifying recipients opportunities to attain job skills through a 10-week program that basically guarantees them a better, high paying job.
- 3) The area Head Start program will reimburse gas mileage to and from GED classes for parents, in their program to get their GED. Head Start also will pay for child-care for a parent that has a child enrolled in the Head Start program to take evening GED classes through the Family Resource Worker.
- 4) Establish a contact person, thorough DHR, for a certified childcare provider that can provide care for children while parents take GED classes or acquire better parenting skills.
- 5) Collaborate efforts by two or more agencies like Head Start and other community programs to promote family literacy by instructing parents and children together. There are many family literacy programs available such as the "Mother Read" that is done by a certified instructor. Family literacy programs encourage parent involvement because their children are also involved. They also can: Provide reading instructions for parents or primary caregivers (pre-GED/GED/ESL etc.). Promote literacy or pre-literacy instruction for children. Provide intergenerational activities where the parents/primary caregivers and children come together to learn and read.

Safety

Children live free of abuse, neglect, crime, and drugs.

Child abuse and neglect prevention

Action Steps

- 1) Ask the Substance Abuse Council to present information regarding existing school-based and parenting programs to the Department of Human Resources, the Court system, and the CPC in an effort to increase referrals to existing programs and identify other needed programs.
- 2) Support existing substance abuse programs and assist in writing grants to fund identified additional substance abuse programs. Establish a grant review team that will review each grant proposal prior to submission.
- 3) Develop a community response task force to address the effect of methamphetamine on children. This would include DHR, Juvenile Court, the school system, Substance Abuse programs, Mental Health, etc.

Teen pregnancy prevention

Action Steps

- 1) Expand the existing teen pregnancy prevention program in the schools to include grades 6-8.
- 2) Obtain permission from the Board of Education to expand the program.
- 3) Pursue ways to fund the purchase of the program handbooks for students in grades 6-8.

Family Resource Center

Action Steps

- 1) Support efforts of the FRC Board in their endeavor to establish a Family Resource Center.
- 2) Assist in writing grants to fund the FRC.
- 3) Develop a grant review team.

Policy Recommendations

- The State of Alabama to offer incentives to dentists willing to live and practice in rural areas of Alabama. These incentives could include tax credit, school loan repayment, etc.
- The State of Alabama needs to increase mental health staff positions/services for children and families in Cherokee County.
- The State of Alabama needs to increase the funding for subsidized childcare (including providing money to match Federal dollars).
- Elected government officials need to express the urgent need for an increase in federal monies for subsidized childcare.
- Pass legislation that has stricter sentencing (prescribed, mandated, etc) for individuals convicted of drug crimes where children are present when the offense occurs.

Accomplishments

July 2005

- The Cherokee County Children's Policy Council prepared and distributed over Family Kits to the Kits to the children at the "So-Cool" (School's Out Camp Of Organized Learning)

August 2005

- The CCCPC had their first workshop on grant writing. Mr. Mike Easterwood, Senior Outreach Associate with the Economic Development Institute at Auburn University conducted the workshop.

September 2005

- Levels Training

October 2005

- Strategic Planning Workshop

November 2005

- Established Family Resource Center Board of Directors

January 2006

- Volunteer Appreciation

June 2006

- "Lets Read" Summer Reading Program that is to increase the reading ability of youth in Cherokee County. The CCCPC, the Cherokee County Library and Burger King sponsored it.